January 2016

the wyoming game & fish department

LANDER REGION newsletter

Photo courtesy of Stan Haver

On the Ground

Graham Ranch recognized for access

The Graham Ranch

Each year the Access Recognition Program (ARP) recognizes landowners who provide access to or through their land for hunters and anglers. The ARP is a joint program of the Wyoming Board of Agriculture, the Wyoming Game and Fish Commission, and Wyoming Wildlife Foundation. This year's recipient of the award for the northwest quadrant of the state is the Graham Ranch in Jeffrey City.

Since 1892 the Graham family has lived and ranched near the Sweetwater River northwest of Jeffrey City, WY. The ranch includes approximately 4,000 acres of deeded ground and large Bureau of Land Management allotments totaling approximately 275,000 acres. Although the primary function of the ranch is cattle, the Graham Ranch is home to antelope, deer, occasionally elk, and plenty of small game and game bird species. The Sweetwater River runs through the ranch along with its

Inside

tributary Long Creek providing great habitat for trout species.

The Grahams have always been welcoming of public access, from hunting and fishing to rock collecting and photography. The area along the Sweetwater River is rich in history attracting a wide variety of recreational users. In 2001, the Graham's enrolled portions of the ranch in the department's Walk-in Area programs. Approximately 1,480 acres were enrolled in the hunting walk-in access program for antelope, deer, elk, rabbit, and predator hunting. They also enrolled their portions of the Sweetwater River, Long Creek, and a small reservoir into the Fishing Walk-in Area program. By doing this, the ranch provides year-round use for hunting and fishing recreation to sportsmen.

The Grahams have always been a welcoming host to the state's hunters and fisherman. They provide great opportunities for hunting and fishing on their property, and work hard to manage the land to benefit both livestock and wildlife. The Graham Ranch is very deserving of the 2016 Access Recognition Program Award.

The Grahams accepting the award at the Stock Growers Association banquet. From left to right: Wyoming Dept. of Agriculture Director Doug Miyamoto, WGFD Director Scott Talbott, WGFD Access Coordinator Dan Smith, Nadine Graham, Marjorie Graham, WGF Commissioner Carrie Little, Wyoming Board of Agriculture Member Kendall Roberts

Above Treeline

Follow our wolverine crew online

Ryan Kindermann and Lee Tafelmeyer plan the path ahead while looking for a spot to place the trail camera.

Nongame program personnel have been busy setting and checking baited camera/hair-snare stations for year two of the Multi-State Wolverine Conservation Project. This winter's wolverine crew consists of Project Biologist Lee Tafelmeyer and Project Technicians Clint Atkinson, Ryan Kindermann, and Sean Ryder. With the help of volunteers, this zealous, rag-tag, and mostly bearded crew pictured on the left, has put on hundreds of miles on snow machines, 4-wheelers, hiking, snowshoeing and skiing in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem and the Bighorn Mountains to set and check 26 camera stations within modeled wolverine habitat. Follow their video blog on the department's Facebook page to learn more about their adventures. https://www.facebook.com/pg/WyoGFD/posts/

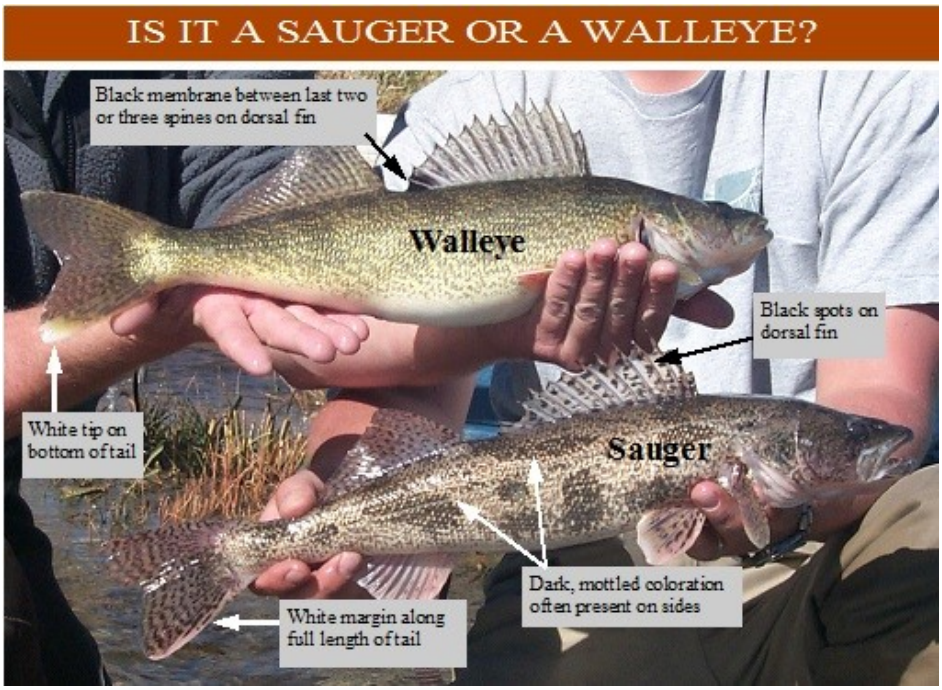
With the Carnivores

New research last year

As recent as only a few years ago, Game and Fish did not have active field monitoring projects for black bears and mountain lions. This past year the Large Carnivore Section took to the ridges and skylines monitoring all species for which they are responsible for across the state (black bears, grizzly bears, and mountain lions). Section personnel successfully radio-collared two mountain lions in the Green River region to evaluate the efficacy of infrared technology to monitor mountain lions and assisted South Dakota personnel with the DNA marking of 17 separate mountain lions. In addition, this past summer field crews conducted DNA "hair-snare" monitoring for black bears in the Greys River drainage in the Pinedale/Jackson region, acquiring over 300 hair samples from bears and tacking on thousands of miles on foot traversing the majestic Wyoming Range. The data collected from these projects will help Game and Fish better understand population dynamics of black bears and mountain lions.

Under the Water

Sauger and walleye - there's a difference!



Knowing the difference between a sauger and its close relative the walleye will be especially important for anglers in 2017. Sauger numbers have increased over the past five years, with good year-classes occurring in 2011 (age-6 in 2017), 2014 (age-3), and 2015 (age-2). This winter, most age-2 saugers will be 10 to 12 inches and most age-3 saugers will be 13 to 16 inches. Age-6 saugers are now reproductively mature, so anglers will likely observe size differences between males and females. Most age-6 male saugers are 16 to 17 inches, whereas females may be up to 22 inches.

The creel limit on saugers in the Wind River drainage is two, whereas six wall-

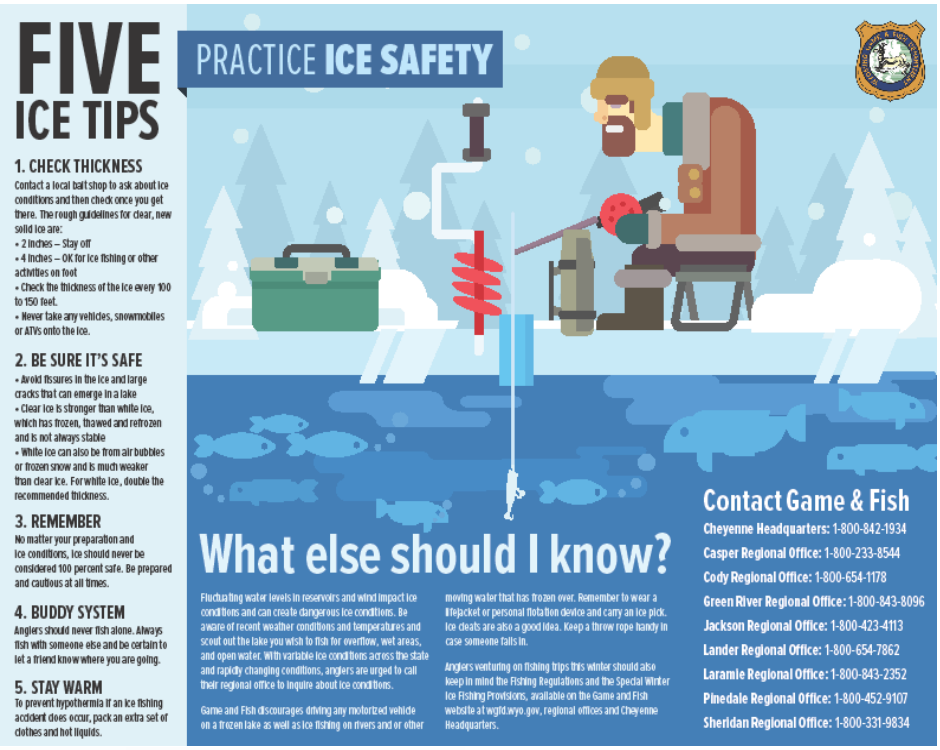
eyes can be harvested daily or kept in possession. Sauger and walleye limits in the Wind River drainage are not combined, so an angler can possess up to eight fish as long as no more than two are saugers and no more than six are walleyes. All walleyes and saugers caught in the Wind River drainage also must remain whole (gills and entrails may be removed) until the angler is off the water and done fishing for the day. Once off the water and done fishing for the day, walleyes and saugers may be filleted for transportation and storage. A piece of skin large enough to allow species identification (at least one (1) inch square) shall remain on all fish fillets while in transit or in the field.

The best way to know the difference between a sauger and a walleye is to look at the dorsal fin. Saugers have distinct spots along their entire dorsal fin, whereas walleyes have no spots but do have a black patch on the membrane between the last two or three spines. Saugers also have dark, mottled coloration along the entire length of their bodies and walleyes do not. Anglers with a sauger possession limit that are having difficulty determining if a fish is a sauger or a walleye are urged to follow the motto "If you don't know, let it go."

Sauger

Under the Water, continued

Ice safety



While your out fishing this winter don't forget these life saving reminders.

And while your at it, check out Tech Insider's video in case you do fall through.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VLQB0WpTvJk

In the Education

Sagebrush ecosystem art and science exhibit

Sage grouse forms, model, and paper mâché grouse.

Education Specialist Rene Schell and Sage-Grouse GIS Analyst Nyssa Whitford continue to work with At Lander Arts and Sciences (ATLAS), The Nature Conservancy, volunteers, and artists around the state, on the upcoming sage brush ecosystem exhibit. Rene and Melissa Hemken (ATLAS member) made two paper mâché sage grouse in preparation to have volunteers make 25 more for local 5th graders to paint as an installment in the exhibit.

These groups also met with Wildlife Biologist Stan Harter for a mini wing bee where staff and volunteers learned how to read the wings to determine age and sex of harvested grouse. This is in preparation to help local 7th graders read the wings during the exhibit and walk through estimating the population and making mock season recommendations. This exhibit will travel around the state and approximate dates and locations are as follows:

- March-May Lander Arts Center
- June/July –UW Berry Biodiversity Center in Laramie
- August –Pinedale library (tentative)
- Sept/Nov– The Science Zone in Casper
- Jan/Feb 2018 Community Fine Arts Center in Rock Springs

Mini wing bee.

1st graders explore wildlife adaptations

Students in the library for hands on time.

One hundred and sixty 1st graders visited the Lander regional office to learn about animal adaptations. They utilized classroom and hands-on time in the library, and then did a scavenger hunt and had pair and share time in the education museum. During the pair and share time, the students had to pair up, identify one animal they found, and share with their partner an adaptation of that animal. Having to explain what they have learned is a great way for the students to better understand the concepts of adaptation.

With the Wildlife

Wildlife conflicts and feeding

Mule deer doe found in Lander that had been killed and then fed on by domestic dogs.

With winter and extremely cold temperatures in full swing, big game animals such as antelope, deer, moose and elk are being seen more frequently in lower elevation habitats, as well as in developed areas and along roadways. Wyoming Game and Fish officials are asking residents to be good winter stewards for our wildlife.

Wildlife, such as moose, and occasionally deer and elk, can be potentially dangerous. Here are some tips to help avoid a conflict:

- Give animals room and allow them an escape route.
- Never crowd or approach wildlife.
- Never feed wildlife.
- Keep pets under control.

These reminders are spurred by a number of recent reports of sick, injured, or dead wildlife in the Lander and Riverton areas. In a couple recent cases deer were found to have been killed and partially eaten by domestic dogs, several sickly deer had to be put down, and many more reported dead during the coldest temperatures.

While many people have the best intentions in mind when they think feeding the deer in their yard will help them, quite the opposite is true. Mule deer, specifically, have a specialized digestive system. They have specific bacteria in their rumen to help digest their natural foods. When feeding unnatural or human foods, mule deer can get sick and often die with stomachs full of indigestible food. It can at times be a slow death of starvation, where they lose body fat, have decreased immunity and are susceptible to parasites and disease. At places where animals are getting fed, they often congregate and more easily pass these parasites and diseases as well as attracting predators like mountain lions into our neighborhoods.

Feeding mortalities